

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

OFA-01 OES-03 AF-06 IO-11 ACDA-05 AID-05 EB-07 OMB-01

TRSE-00 COME-00 /103 W

----- 036513

R 261705Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7774

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NASSAU 0127

DEPT PASS ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS, USCINCSO

FOR ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BF US

SUBJ: CURRENT BAHAMIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 010605

1. FOLLOWING ARE VIEWS OF COUNTRY TEAM OF BAHAMIAN PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. POWER, POSTURE AND POLICIES GENERALLY KEYED TO HEADINGS IN PARA 2 REFTTEL. WE HAVE MADE NO SPECIAL INQUIRIES AND HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED TO SEPARATE OFFICIAL FROM NON-OFFICIAL BAHAMIAN PERCEPTIONS, EXCEPT WHERE MEANINGFUL IN OUR VERY SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS.

2. POST-VIETNAM/WATERGATE AMERICA. DIRECTLY EXPOSED AS THEY ARE TO AMERICAN MEDIA, BAHAMIANS UNDERSTAND FAR MORE CLEARLY THAN OTHERS IN THE ARA AREA THE DOMESTIC FACTORS INVOLVED IN WATERGATE AND OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM. CONCOMITANTLY, THEY HAVE A BETTER APPRECIATION FOR THE AGONY INFLICTED ON THE NATION BY THOSE AFFAIRS. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT, LIKE AMERICANS THEMSELVES, THEY HAVE COME TO ANY DEFINITIVE CON-

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CLUSIONS ABOUT OUR NATIONAL RESOLVE. WHILE THEY WILL BE WATCHING

EVENTS LIKE ANGOLA, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND, CLOSER TO HOME, OUR STANCE IN CUBA TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE MORE VULNERABLE GLOBALLY AS A RESULT OF THE SHOCK OF VIETNAM AND THE DISAPPOINTMENT ABOUT DETENTE, THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO HARBOR ANY MEANINGFUL DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OR OUR WILLINGNESS TO DEFEND THE BAHAMAS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, BAHAMIAN ASSERTIVENESS ON SUCH ISSUES AS THE SPINY LOBSTER IS PROBABLY BASED MORE ON AN ASSESSMENT ON THEIR PART THAT THE STRENGTH OF OUR TIES ARE SUCH AS TO ALLOW SUCH BEHAVIOR RATHER THAN ON ANY DESIRE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PERCEIVED NEW U.S. WEAKNESSES.

3. EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL STRAINS. BAHAMIANS WHO COUNT UNDERSTAND U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS AND, IN PARTICULAR, EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL INTERPLAY. ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT THEY HAVE NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD POWER OF STATE DELEGATIONS TO PASS ON, VETO OR DETOUR LEGISLATION AFFECTING THEIR CONSTITUENCIES. THE ROLE OF THE FLORIDA DELEGATION IN THE SPINY LOBSTER AFFAIR MAY SERVE AS AN ANTEDOTE TO POSSIBLE MISCONCEPTIONS IN THIS REGARD. IN GENERAL, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESS PROBABLY VIEWED BY BAHAMIANS AS UNAVOIDABLE AND TRANSITORY OUTGROWTH OF GENERAL BREAKDOWN OF OLD FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS AND OF CONGRESSIONAL SUSPICIONS ENGENDERED BY WATERGATE AND FACT THAT PRESIDENT WAS APPOINTED RATHER THAN ELECTED TO OFFICE. THESE DIFFERENCES PROBABLY SEEN AS AN ANNOYANCE THAT WILL HAVE TO BE LIVED WITH BUT THAT WILL HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON COOPERATION OR INTERDEPENDENCE WITH U.S.

4. INTELLIGENCE REVELATIONS. CONGRESSIONAL REVELATIONS ABOUT U.S. INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES HAVE ELICITED "HO HUM, WE KNEW IT ALL ALONG" RESPONSE FROM BAHAMIANS WHO TEND TO BE CYNICAL ABOUT SUCH THINGS. ANOTHER OUTGROWTH OF THIS CYNICISM, HOWEVER, IS DEGREE OF SHOCK AND DISBELIEF AT AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN SELF-FLAGELLATION. PECULIARLY BAHAMIAN FALL-OUT FROM REVELATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE DEEPENING OF SUSPICIONS AND SENSITIVITIES ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF IRS AND OTHER U.S. AGENTS IN THE BAHAMAS.

5. CUBA AND ANGOLA. BAHAMIANS HARBOR CULTURAL ANTIPATHY
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TO CUBA. GIVEN GEOPOLITICAL POSITION OF BAHAMAS AND GROWTH OF CUBAN STRENGTH AND AGGRESSIVENESS, THIS PROBABLY TRANSLATES TO A DEGREE OF FEAR OVER THE NEAR TERM. THIS FEAR IS DOUBLE-EDGED, MOTIVATING AS IT DOES, A DESIRE TO DEAL WITH CUBA AS A FACT OF LIFE AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHAT MUST BE AN EVEN STRONGER DESIRE NOT TO ANTAGONIZE THE U.S. UNDULY IN THE PROCESS. (IT WILL BE INTERESTING IN THIS REGARD TO SEE HOW THE GCOB HANDLES THE CUBAN FISHING TALKS IN THE WAKE OF THE

SPINY LOBSTER REBUFF TO THE U.S.) BAHAMIAN OFFICIALS AND PUBLIC ARE KEENLY AWARE OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND, AT LEAST AMONG MINEXSTAFF OFFICIALS, OF OUR MARKED IRRITATION OVER CUBAN MUCKING ABOUT NOT ONLY IN ANGOLA BUT ALSO IN PUERTO RICO. THOSE OFFICIALS HAVE VOLUNTARILY GONE TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS TO AVOID BECOMING INVOLVED LIKE THEIR BARBADIAN FRIENDS. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE SOUGHT TO USE BACKGROUNDERS ON ANGOLA AS MEANS OF REINFORCING THIS TENDENCY.

6. MULTILATERALISM. BAHAMIANS, WHO VIEW THEMSELVES AS MUCH AN ATLANTIC AS CARIBBEAN NATION AND WHO SEE THEMSELVES AS HAVING LITTLE IF ANYTHING IN COMMON WITH NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING LATIN AMERICANS, HAVE NO INTEREST IN OAS OR SELA AND ONLY LUKEWARM INTEREST IN CARICOM WITH WHICH THEY SEEK CULTURAL BUT NOT ECONOMIC TIES. RELATIONS WITH U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO BE CONDUCTED ON BILATERAL BASIS.

7. UN VOTING. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. ARE HAVING LITTLE EFFECT ON BAHAMIAN VOTING PATTERNS IN UN, WHICH GENERALLY PARALLEL OURS. GCOB OFFICIALS ARE WILLING TO BE EDUCATED ON SPECIFIC ISSUES WHICH ARE PERIPHERAL TO BAHAMAS AND UPON WHICH THEY HAVE NOT FOCUSED AND ALMOST SEEM APPRECIATIVE OF OUR LOBBYING EFFORTS, WHICH PROBABLY SERVE AS USEFUL INPUT IN DRAWING UP OF VOTING INSTRUCTIONS. THEIR RECENT COMMENTS NEVERTHELESS REFLECT, OR WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE, THAT THEY ARE COMING UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE FROM THE SO-CALLED NON-ALIGNED STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN WHO ALLEGEDLY SCORN THEIR CLOSENESS WITH US IN THE UN AND OTHER FORUMS. WHILE THIS COULD WELL BE ONLY A TACTICAL PLOY USEFUL TO THEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT THEY ARE COMING UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE TO ASSERT THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND THAT UN VOTING PROVIDES A FORUM TO DO SO WITHOUT TOO HEAVY A HAND. OUR SUPPORT OF GCOB POSITIONS IS ALSO APPRECIATED, PART-
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ICULARLY WITH REGARD TO ARCHIPELAGO PRINCIPLE.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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TRSE-00 COME-00 /103 W

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 NASSAU 0127

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FOR ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

8. ECONOMIC SUPPORT: TOURIST-ORIENTED BAHAMAS IS ALMOST INEXTRICABLY TIED TO U.S. ECONOMY, AND THERE IS NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO DEPENDENCE ON U.S. TOURIST AND INVESTOR. CURRENT FUZZINESS OF INCREASINGLY NATIONALISTIC GCOB ECONOMIC POLICIES AND APPARENT TENDENCY TO PLAY POLITICS WITH THOSE POLICIES (AN ELECTION MAY BE IMMINENT) ARE HAVING A DAMPENING EFFECT ON INVESTOR CONFIDENCE, BUT THERE IS SCANT REASON TO DOUBT GOVERNMENT OR OPPOSITION COMMITMENT TO FREE ENTERPRISE. FAR MORE DEPENDENT THAN AMERICANS ON OIL IMPORTS, BAHAMIANS ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF ADVERSE EFFECTS OF REDUCTIONS IN FLOW OF CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS. THIS AWARENESS OUTWEIGHTS PROBABLE SYMPATHY AND ENVY FOR ATTEMPTS, FOR EXAMPLE, OF JAMAICA AND GUYANA TO EXPLOIT THEIR RAW MATERIALS AS ECONOMIC LEVERAGE. BAHAMAS HAS LITTLE TO EXPORT, BUT GCOB OFFICIALS SHOWING GREAT INTEREST IN GSP AS POSSIBLE SPUR TO DEVELOPMENT.

9. AID TO THIRD WORLD. PROBABLY DUE TO THEIR EXPOSURE TO STREAM OF AFFLUENT APPEARING TOURISTS AND RETIREES AND THE EASE WITH WHICH DOLS 10 MILLION WAS MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE BARTAD AGRICULTURAL PROJECT ON ANDROS, MOST BAHAMIANS PROBABLY
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HAVE AN INFLATED VIEW OF U.S. ABILITIES AND WILLINGNESS TO MEET NEEDS OF DEVELOPING NATIONS. THIS MISPERCEPTION PERSISTS DESPITE FACTS TO THE CONTRARY IN U.S. MEDIA WHICH READILY AVAILABLE HERE AND IS GOOD PART OF REASON BEHIND UNREALISTIC BAHAMIAN EXPECTATIONS VIS-A-VIS QUID IN BASE FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS.

10. FACT REMAINS THAT CONTINUED USE OF FACILITIES IN BAHAMAS IS MOST IMPORTANT IMMEDIATE U.S. OBJECTIVE HERE AND RESOLUTION OF THAT ISSUE IS NOT RELATED TO BAHAMIAN PERCEPTION OF U.S. INTERNAL FACTORS BUT RATHER ON HOW MUCH THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO PAY TO STAY. IN THIS REGARD, RECENT PRESS REPORTS STATING THAT WE ARE OFFERING ONE BILLION DOLLARS TO THE SPANISH FOR CONTINUED BASE RIGHTS THERE HAS NOT BEEN HELPFUL ESPECIALLY AS AT LEAST ONE PROMINENT BAHAMIAN (SECRETARY OF THE CABINET BAIN) HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN REPORTED AS MAKING COMPARISONS BETWEEN OUR LARGESS TO THE SPANIARDS AND OUR PARSIMONIOUS APPROACH WITH BAHAMIANS. WHILE MR. BAIN HAS OBVIOUSLY GIVEN NONE OR LITTLE CONSIDERATION TO THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A COMPARISON, THIS ATTITUDE MAY PRESENT A REAL AND SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT TO REACHING AN AGREEMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, ANTIAMERICAN FEELING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NASSAU00127
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760029-0541
From: NASSAU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760121/aaaaasng.tel
Line Count: 239
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 10605
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by saccheem>; APPROVED <20 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CURRENT BAHAMIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S.
TAGS: PFOR, BF, US, XM
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006